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Local Critiques of Global Development: Patriotism in Late Colonial Buganda

By Carol Summers

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Interviewed by an incredulous anthropologist in 1955, an elderly Paulo Lukongwa insisted that more than half a century of colonial development policies had brought almost nothing to his country. Writing was new and wonderful, he admitted, and he gave European colonizers credit for cars and bicycles that made travel faster. But otherwise, nothing was new. Martin Southwold, the young anthropologist, suggested that clocks were new, and Lukongwa pointed out that they'd had roosters to wake them up. Surely the gramophone was progress, Southwold asserted, and Lukongwa responded that when they had wanted music, they called people to play—and what was more, those people had danced. No gramophone—or radio—did that. Reaching, Southwold noted that the radio also brought news. Once, Lukongwa asserted, they had all had spirits living in their houses that passed on local gossip. Thus people then had plenty of news. In his fieldnotes, Southwold reported that he was merely able to respond with an “umph” as Lukongwa completed his explanation that “God ... has given us all the things we need; and he gave the Europeans cleverness so that they could make things for themselves.... But you Europeans disobeyed him and came here to Africa to take away our land. You are ... robbers! Look at that Governor [Andrew Cohen], what a bad man he is, always trying to take away the people's land.”¹

Sir Andrew Cohen, who Lukongwa so bluntly condemned, was a development governor par excellence, with a vision for the transformation of Uganda that went well beyond writing and bicycles. Arriving in 1952 to be governor of Uganda, he pushed for local political development through a new system of election that would integrate the kingdom of Buganda into the Protectorate of Uganda, providing a Legislative Council that would be able to lead the Protectorate forward, rather than clinging to the region's complex history of treaties, kingdoms, and locally powerful individuals and families. With civil service reforms, he also sought to expand the country's corps of technical experts and develop the country economically, providing scientific help to cash crop farmers in cotton and coffee, and a modern system of land surveying, public health, veterinary services, and more.

Lukongwa's vision of good governance, though, like that of many of his Baganda peers, was local. Buganda mattered. Successful policy and programs would strengthen its clans and kingdom. Cohen's ideas were much larger in scale. He sought to expand the

¹ Martin Southwold, visit with Paulo Lukongwa 31 August 1955, Box 6/4, Audrey Richards Papers, London School of Economics (hereafter LSE), London, UK.

political sphere, foster economic growth, integrate Buganda with Uganda, Uganda with East Africa, and East Africa with the world. The immediate clash between these ideas of how to foster the region's future led Cohen to deport Buganda's *kabaka* [king] in 1953, triggering a dramatic crisis that shook the region's politics, and triggered a deluge of explanations, spying, lobbying, lawsuits, and anthropology, that recorded a rich archive on development and power that documented not simply perspectives of European experts or project managers, but local, intensely political, observers who spoke for themselves and their people not simply as subjects, but as citizens.²

Late colonial Buganda therefore offers a historian an unusual opportunity to think about how indigenous actors critiqued modern views of development not through essential culture, generic conservatism or romantic egalitarianism, but out of an understanding that the overarching centralization, professionalization and progressivism behind modern development policies attacked local actors' ability to control and shape their own economic and political futures. Ganda critics of development policy did not define democracy through elections or economic reforms on a cold war scale of left or right. Instead, they can best be understood as patriots who understood that for local men and women to be politically effective, power had to remain connected to the land, and within a literal arm's reach of the people.

Baganda, from the 1870s onward, demonstrated unusual skill at international lobbying and image control. Activists did not resort to an emphasis on the local out of a naïve fear of the foreign. Indeed, by the time Lukongwa and others spoke, the kingdom was notable for a series of public relations and political victories against British initiatives and imperial policy. From the Protectorate of Uganda's earliest years, when Baganda had funded and fostered the development of the Church of Uganda and the training of Roman Catholic brethren and priests, to the 1940s when they portrayed themselves as protectors of a Britain stressed by total war, to the 1950s as they successfully moved churches, parliament, public opinion, legal experts, and ultimately the Colonial Office to return their king, their track record of success in maintaining and developing Buganda's integrity and challenging imperial initiatives was strong.³ Some observers characterized Buganda as a precolonial nation-state.⁴ Regardless of specific labels, the Ganda polity was clearly something more than a simple ethnicity produced in reaction to British imperial rule,⁵ though Ganda activists certainly voiced ethnic loyalties when politically expedient.

² Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 52–56, suggests that Ugandans subjected by colonial power to local chiefs within regimes of forced labor, taxation, and indirect rule, lost their ability to negotiate. Such analysis is hard to reconcile with the evidence of ongoing and successful political activism discussed below.

³ For a series of documents showing this process, see D.A. Low, ed. *Mind of Buganda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971). For a recent Ganda-centric analysis, see J.S.B. Muwanga, *On the Kabaka's Road for Buganda* (Kampala: LDC Publishing, 2005).

⁴ Elliot Green, "Ethnicity and Nationhood in Pre-Colonial Africa: The Case of Buganda," *Nations and Nationalism* 16, 1 (2010).

⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 23–25, suggests that reactive ethnicity was normal in late colonial contexts.

Elsewhere, looking at the events and rhetoric of Ugandan campaigns has allowed me to explore how Ganda activists deployed an ethical vision of politics to challenge local elites and specific British policies.⁶ Here, though, I seek to use one of the less dramatic concerns of Ugandan politics, “Closer Union,” to examine not the internal political ethos of Buganda, but Ugandan activists’ orientation toward a broader world of political and economic developmentalism. I look not simply at their rejection of such models of change, but why and how they articulated and acted on that rejection. This rejection was not naive primordialism, but part of an engaged, patriotic, citizenry with a clear sense of what levels of politics offered voice and power to Baganda and Ganda institutions.

Sometimes, as one reads an archive, one’s sources go dull. Or, to rephrase: in the mist of interesting, innovative, provocative political conceptualization and debate, otherwise creative activists whose ideas routinely challenge conventional visions of how colonial power operates, or how transhistorical local ideals work, become cranky and obsessive. This happened in Buganda over the issue of Closer Union and East African Federation. Sir Apolo Kagwa, the country’s prime minister, spoke for the entire leadership in 1919 when he asserted “We do not want our country to be united to any other Protectorate ... we would very much like this Protectorate to remain as it is.”⁷ This debate over Buganda’s connection to bigger political and economic units remained important to the country’s intellectuals, leaders, colonial administrators and imperial businessmen, and even a share of the ordinary public over a period of decades, culminating in (depending on how one views the actual events) the Kabaka crisis of 1953–1955, the independence of Uganda, or ongoing twenty-first century internal debates over Federo and larger discussions over East African trading relations. In other words, “Closer Union,” a straightforward question of the *scale* or appropriate unit of governance and politics, mattered deeply to the people involved. Every Ugandan writer or speaker whose ideas have survived from the 1919s through the 1950s opposed it, often vigorously.

Given such a record, it becomes important to understand how this technical question became a critical political flashpoint for such a range of actors. Beyond the obvious simple question of whether Buganda and Uganda should share or coordinate administration with other East African regions including Kenya and Tanganyika, the debate, poorly understood by British observers at the time, offers a way to glimpse the logic of a persistent strand of Ugandan thinking about what mattered.

In this debate was a deeply felt discussion of loyalty, citizenship, identity, and sovereignty that profoundly challenges narratives of African anti-colonial nationalism *and* imperial domination. In the midst of what has been labeled a “Federal Moment,” Ganda

⁶ See, especially, Carol Summers, “Radical Rudeness: Ugandan Social Critiques in the 1940s,” *Journal of Social History* (Spring 2006), 741–70; Carol Summers “Grandfathers, Grandsons, Morality, and Radical Politics in Late Colonial Buganda,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, 3 (2005), 427–47; and Carol Summers, “Catholic Action and Ugandan Radicalism: Political Activism in Buganda, 1930–1950,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39 (2009), 60–90. In conference papers, I have also explored the Kabaka crisis of the 1950s.

⁷ Sir Apolo Kagwa to Reverend CF Andrews, 22 December 1919, in D.A. Low, ed. *Mind of Buganda*, 51–52.

activists rejected any “universal acceptance of nationstatehood” or empire, the ideas recent scholars have seen as the dominant understanding of political units.⁸ Their rhetoric clashes with assessments such as those of Mahmood Mamdani, that portray indigenous identities, chiefs, and kings as simply agents of British empire, working as “despots” in a “decentralized” administrative structure that constructed and used tradition to control a general population that could only be liberated or achieve political citizenship through a new nation in a modern state.⁹

Nor did Buganda’s activists accept imperial reconstruction and development achieved through analysis, planning, development, and multiracialism, even as British administrators and development technocrats understood centrally planned economic and political development as both needed and achievable through East African Closer Union.

Buganda’s discussion of development planning and Closer Union was profoundly misunderstood by Britain’s administrators and politicians, as it emphasized local terms and values. It was not, in other words, simply a debate over questions British officials were willing to negotiate, such as which borders or how many legislative assembly seats Buganda should have. Even the social scientists of the East African Social Research Institute, working with Ganda intellectuals such as Eridadi Mulira and W.P. Tamukedde, gathered testimony on clans, gifts, clothes, and husbands, often without emphasizing its political significance.

Ganda politics, documented by a range of actors, can explain the grip that the issue had on the Ganda public. Ganda emphases on local, tangible, even intimate, politics, helps explain why people were willing to mobilize so creatively at even a hint that Britain might push the kingdom to participate in progressive reform and development. In the 1950s alone, activists achieved publicity for personal acts of political devotion, including living in trees, dressing in barkcloth and refusing to shave beards. They mobilized economically with massive boycotts and strikes. And they acted politically with demonstrations, lawsuits, lobbying in Britain, and the negotiation of a new constitution. Valuing local kingdom politics led them to reject, ever more vigorously, suggestions that the country join in political and economic union with the other British territories of East Africa: Tanganyika and, especially, Kenya.

Background Context:

Buganda is a kingdom in East Africa that has been a coherent social and political entity since the precolonial era. During the nineteenth century, its leaders invited missionaries (and traders) into the country, developing an educated literate elite. Amidst the disruption of succession disputes and civil war, this new elite negotiated a protectorate with Great Britain that blocked the sorts of territorial claims Britain made elsewhere in Africa, allied the Ganda leadership with the British colonizing mission, and ensconced Buganda’s ruling

⁸ Michael Collins, “Decolonization and the ‘Federal Moment,’” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013), 21–40.

⁹ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 43–90, 115–28. Mamdani’s examples include Buganda, but are heavily shaped by Southern African cases.

elite in a key role at the center of a new Uganda Protectorate that was geographically much more extensive than the precolonial kingdom. Buganda's politicians were proud, but also historically accurate, mostly, in their claims during subsequent crises that Buganda had not been conquered, but simply chose to ally itself with Britain.

During the colonial era, Buganda's status as effectively a self-governing kingdom was initially helpful to a British administration. By the 1920s, though, Britain's governors of Uganda began an escalating pattern of clashes with the kingdom as they sought to implement British ideas of imperial development. Ganda activists, increasingly, saw themselves as responding to a British arrogance that radically violated Buganda's negotiated special status as an ally of Britain. And they understood that arrogance as both a threat to economic interests and a rejection of identities that may accurately be referred to as patriotisms—loyalties to clan, king, land, and generational continuity—that structured the reciprocal belongings, accountability, and rights of Ganda political life.

Buganda first fended off sovereignty-challenging administrative reform proposals in the 1920s, much to the disgust of British administrators. The 1928 Hilton Young Commission had proposed Closer Union, but the government of Buganda responded so forcefully in rejecting its recommendations that they received an acknowledgement of their concerns even from within the Colonial Office.¹⁰

The pattern escalated in the 1940s after World War II as the British became increasingly serious about political reform and development during what was later labeled the Second Colonial Occupation.¹¹ It is worth noting that Buganda was an extremely prosperous region, drawing immigrant workers from throughout East Africa and producing an indigenous prosperity sufficient that Baganda became major creditors and donors to the British war effort during the 1940s.¹² Closer Union and East African Federation were issues again after World War II as the Bataka movement mobilized. And by the early 1950s, Buganda was home to a volatile politics, carried out in mass meetings, newspapers, consumer boycotts, strikes, slander campaigns, assassinations, and intense lobbying. Politically active Baganda both inside and outside government disagreed energetically over

¹⁰ Kabaka Daudi Chwa's government sent in a memo signed by all senior members of government noting that, "History shows us that many countries which began in this way, in the end have formed a union, and the result of that would be in the end to abolish the power of the natives, who would no longer be taken into account and the power would remain in the hands of the white people alone." A. Parkinson noted that the submission was an "interesting and well-written letter," and a note from "WCB" acknowledged Ganda fears that a commissioner would look at the region from the point of view of white Kenyan settlers, and "I don't blame them." CO 536/29, National Archives of Great Britain (hereafter NAGB), Kew, London, UK.

¹¹ For discussions of the practice of this second occupation, see Joana Lewis, *Empire State-Building* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), which depicts the process for Kenya. The Worthington plan, radically modified almost as soon as it was proposed, was the key element of planned economic development in Uganda. Political reforms expanded a professionalized protectorate administration in the 1940s, and offered increasing numbers of elected "unofficial" representatives in Buganda's Lukiiko and Uganda's Legislative Assembly by the 1950s. See, for example, CO 536/214; CO 536/219, NAGB.

¹² See Carol Summers, "Uganda after World War II," in Judith Byfield and Carolyn Brown, eds., *Africa's World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

many issues, and fought intensely and ambitiously among themselves. All, though, opposed Britain's effort to incorporate Buganda into Uganda through reforms of the Protectorate's legislative assembly, and to bring Uganda more fully into East Africa through Closer Union in an East African Federation.¹³ Thus, in 1953, when Britain's colonial secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, made a casual and apparently accidental after dinner remark about expecting East Africa to move toward Closer Union, Buganda's activists mobilized, trying to fend off pillage, betrayal, and destruction.¹⁴

Uganda's new governor, Andrew Cohen, who had spearheaded reforms in the Colonial Office before being appointed to bring political development and reform to Uganda, responded by trying to use Buganda's young king (Kabaka) to control this mobilization. This failed, and Cohen persuaded the Colonial Office to support the Kabaka's deportation, provoking the 1953 Kabaka crisis, a clash that profoundly shook Buganda's political establishment, re-arranging it from an arena of volatile, impassioned patriotic debate to one of melodramatic and personal discussions of loyalty and betrayal.¹⁵

In East Africa, the size and scope of states and the degree of sovereignty that "independence" would offer people in Africa was far from obvious. Progressive British planners sought big multiracial regional aggregates and advocated an East African Union, or at least a greater Uganda, to facilitate decolonization and simultaneously deflect local claims for land, traditional rights and local control.¹⁶ The idea was to develop new large

¹³ The logic was centered on whether Buganda would be able to control the decisions of whatever administrative entity it was a part of. Baganda did not want to be in the minority of anything. That was true of the Legislative Assembly of Uganda. And it was true of any proposed East African assembly, where they feared Indian and European domination. In the East African context, the language of "multiracialism," where each ethnic block would receive an equal share of power as an entity (rather than by population) meant that the white settlers of Kenya and the white and Indian businessmen of Uganda would effectively be disenfranchising Buganda, laying the kingdom open to looting by aliens.

¹⁴ The version reported in the *Uganda Herald* was as follows: "Federation, both politically and economically, will be of immense benefit to the three Central African territories. Nor should we exclude from our minds the evolution, as time goes on, of still larger measures of unification, and possibly still larger measures of federation of the whole East African Territories. We have shown that by wise and patient building of political institutions, by fostering responsibilities and above all by working in larger units, we can make countries diverse and prosperous, and able to do without too much outside aid to defend themselves from some of the ordinary dangers which may assail them." Oliver Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary, quoted in Editorial, *Uganda Herald*, 14 July 1953.

¹⁵ I have written about this elsewhere, at length, in draft chapters on both the transformation of Buganda's political story from development Bildungsroman to melodrama of betrayal, and on women's voices and marital metaphors of wifely loyalty in the crisis's political culture. Carol Summers, *Restless Tongues* (unpublished manuscript).

¹⁶ Ideally, this would parallel the Central African Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland that emerged (to vigorous condemnation by Uganda's political activists) in 1953. See Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment,'" 21–40, on the Federal Moment. For a summary of Ugandan's denunciations of Central African Federation: "Federation appeared to us as the worst sell-out of the African interests by the British," Abu Mayanja to Marjorie Perham, 15 March 1954, 514/6 Marjorie Perham Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford, UK (hereafter RH).

scale centralized politics that offered people rights and resources for development within a expanded and technocratic modern state. Baganda, though, understood Union/Federation as aliens claiming their land, interfering with their wealth and entrepreneurship, attacking their independence, and rejecting their historical distinctiveness. Activists therefore propounded a patriotic citizenship within Buganda. Their loyalty was not simply to clans or king, or to some stereotypical tribe, but to an identity with modern substance and symbols that included a parliament, courts, police, and other bureaucratic institutions, along with elections, a flag, and a national anthem, within a region that was a regional administrative and commercial center. This activism culminated in 1953 when Buganda's parliament proposed secession from Uganda.¹⁷

Ganda Patriotism

People, Clans and Land

Understanding just how thoroughly Ganda patriotism failed to fit into British models of political development from tradition to modernity—models that were in use not simply by administrators, but by academics and advocates of nationalism—requires a look at the rhetoric Baganda activists deployed.

Long-term activist Y.S. Bamutta put forward a subtle vision of patriotism as early as 1927, arguing that Baganda needed to be able to critique the government without being accused of being disloyal. Buganda's history was important, but Baganda had rights, and needed to be able to draw on that history in new ways. Loyalty, for Bamutta, was not to be found in following British suggestions and holding on to old institutions and rules, but in active engagement that considered the country's "road," a metaphor still used by Baganda considering the kingdom's significance.¹⁸ Ugandans, he asserted, would each "voice his voice ... determined to fight till he gets his Kabaka's power back" from those who labeled critiques of officials as disloyal. "I call such behavior on the part of some official, as undiplomatic and unmanly."¹⁹ For Bamutta, Buganda was far more than its official government, or British allies.

Just what that Buganda was that Bamutta and others were loyal to became clearer in subsequent decades. One aspect was the Kabaka's power. During the 1940s, though, the actual Kabaka was a youth, and at best peripherally involved in any of the debates and struggles over local politics. In that context, in the midst of an energetic civil society characterized by newspapers, demonstrations, political associations, activist networks, and

¹⁷ The complexities of this crisis are catalogued in the governor's correspondence with the Colonial Office collected in CO 822, NAGB, in multiple sub-files. Vivid detail is also available from Mutesa II's own memoir, Kabaka Mutes II, *The Desecration of my Kingdom* (London: Constable, 1967), and a narrative by the serving Katikiro (prime minister of Buganda) during the crisis, Paulo Kavuma, *Crisis in Buganda, 1953–55* (London: Collings, 1979).

¹⁸ See, for example, Joseph Muzenga, *The Kabaka's Road*.

¹⁹ Yusufu Bamutta, "By a Muganda," 20/12/27 Bamutta Papers, B 36, Africana Manuscripts, Makerere University Library, Kampala, Uganda.

plenty of plotting by both individuals and groups, loyalty to Buganda was more than just loyalty to the person or principle of the Kabaka.

Instead, the public politics that emerged into high profile events in the general strike of January 1945, the assassination of the prime minister later that year, and the systematic mobilization that led to the insurrection of 1949, expounded an ideal of Buganda as a community of grandparents and grandsons. This community or nation extended through time, as land passed from one generation to another, clans [Bataka] provided for their people, and defended networks of people and land. Ideas about Bataka were in some ways deeply conservative, emphasizing the clans and their lands and the dangers of offering clan land for modernizing innovations or regional goals even when they seemed appealing, as with Makerere University. The most influential early (banned) pamphlet of this mobilization, *Buganda Nyaffe* (Buganda our mother), asserted that “My dear Child ... I desire to emphasize it to you that it is your responsibility to preserve this land which should not be fragmented until you depart from it and bequeath it to your grandchildren....”²⁰ Activists echoed this, with rumors reaching British spies of assertions that “the giving away of our land is just like cutting off an arm of one's mother.”²¹ These activists did not necessarily oppose change, though some cautioned that what ripened fast rotted. They critiqued lazy appointed chiefs who failed to think and act to help Buganda as they “did not take off their bedroom slippers until mid-day.” Such men were no more than British clients.²²

Reactions to the assassination of Prime Minister Martin Luther Nsibirwa, shot on the steps of Namirembe Cathedral the morning after he forced acceptance of a law that would allow the Protectorate to claim Ganda land for Makerere University, confirmed how thoroughly many Baganda understood loyalty to Buganda's land as something more than just Buganda's government or law: from Entebbe and Masaka and onward into Busoga, spies reported reactions to the assassination were “shock, followed by restrained jubilation” and more ominously, one reported that “a Muganda remarked that now that Buganda had started to kill unpopular ministers the country was progressing.”²³ Rumors circulated of plans to continue to assassinate those who would despoil the country, especially prime ministers and other leaders. The British administration responded by

²⁰ From translation in Low, ed., *Mind of Buganda*.

²¹ Vernacular Press summary, *Fortnightly Review*, 31 July 1945, CO 536/215, NAGB. This may have been a reference to a famous saying of Kabaka Mutesa I, who was reported to have told nineteenth-century missionaries questing land that, “This country is like a woman, she is our mother, we cannot cut off an arm of our mother and give it to you.” Waiswa, in *Uganda Star*, *Fortnightly Review*, 27 April 1948, CO 537/3600, NAGB.

²² Idi Nsereko, *Gambuze*, Vernacular Press Summary, *Fortnightly Review*, 22 November 1945, and *Rumours and Insults*, *Fortnightly Review*, 21-6-25, CO 536/215, NAGB. This critique of chiefs continued in later years. Joswa Kivu, for example, asserted that chiefs just “sit in their residences and wait for people to make them presents.” *Fortnightly Review* for 6 May 1948, CO 537/3600, NAGB.

²³ *Rumours and Insults*, *Fortnightly Review*, 27 September 1945, CO 536/215, NAGB.

sending the young king out of the country within days, officially for his education, but more practically from fear that he would be killed next.²⁴

Loyalty to Buganda thus, in the 1940s, invoked king and development, but understood them as contingent to the land and people of the clans. When development became a centralized top down process, it threatened Buganda. And the higher loyalty was to the land, ancestors, and descendants.

This loyalty and mobilization was not, however, part of a closed system with boundaries on the definition of Buganda. Instead, Buganda was seen by activists as an expansive concept, capable of including people from a variety of backgrounds by offering a place to belong, with easy incorporation into clans that were far more than simple lineages or descent groups. Early Baganda interpreters of Buganda were explicit that Bataka [clans] were not about blood.²⁵ Arrest records from political activism in 1945, too, make clear that activists included individuals from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and the movement stayed inclusive even in the late 1940s as the rhetoric became more explicitly about Bataka.²⁶ Geographical borders or blood descent was not especially relevant in determining who was a mutaka and thus a muganda. A person became a muganda because he or she belonged to a clan. And in belonging to a clan, a person acquired a transhistorical identity that was rooted in the ancestors and grandfathers of that clan—in the graves that marked their deaths and sustained the banana gardens of their descendants' lives. Ganda identity was not a citizenship of brothers characterized by horizontal fraternity and equity,²⁷ but a vertical, networked, constantly growing hierarchy of reciprocal patronage and protection, connected through time. Ganda citizenship with its rights, responsibilities, and belonging, was not to a “tribe” or “ethnicity” or “nation-state” but a network—an imagined community—of people, living, dead and unborn.²⁸

²⁴ See, for example, Fortnightly Review, 27 September 1945, CO 536/2015, NAGB.

²⁵ See, for example, Sir Apolo Kagwa, *Customs of the Baganda*, E. Kalibala, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), and Ernest Kalibala, “The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe of East Africa” (Ph.D. dissertation Harvard University, 1946), which argued that Bataka originated in food aversions.

²⁶ Not only were people of varying ethnicities involved in the 1945 strike, but intelligence reports on specifically Bataka meetings include attendance by Basoga and others. See, for example, Fortnightly Review, 17 June 1948, CO 537/3600, NAGB. Semakula Mulumba went even further, pushing for inclusion in his assertion that “all the black people should know that the land is the country, where there is no land there is no country or nation ... there is no people,... therefore the land of Uganda belongs to the people of Uganda ... all wealth and well-being comes from the land...,” a statement that both echoed earlier emphases on land and moved from specific grandfathers and grandsons to a much more general vision of both. Semakula Mulumba, “The Soil is the Land,” *Gambuze*, translated and excerpted in Vernacular Press Report, Fortnightly Intelligence Summary, 3 June 1948, CO 537/3600, NAGB.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 7, for example, classically defined nationalism as characterized by “fraternity” and “horizontal comradeship.” The citizenship and patriotism I describe in Buganda was notably different from Anderson’s nationalism.

²⁸ I have discussed this more extensively in an earlier paper, C. Summers, “Grandfathers, Grandsons” 427–47.

By the late 1940s, activists in Buganda mobilized Bataka ideals not simply to block specific initiative or protect clan resources, but to challenge British leadership and guidance. Drawing on an inclusive idea of Bataka based citizenship that insisted “that the country is its people and the common people are the majority and the rulers are the minority,” they argued that if chiefs spoke at the people rather than listening to and caring for the people, they were like mothers who had been distracted by money and forgotten their children.²⁹ Buganda’s survival and health, Bataka activists asserted, required that the people claim control of the country back from the chiefs. “Talk boldly, do not cower,” a Bataka speaker ordered an audience, emphasizing that this was necessary even when addressing chiefs, the Europeans of the Protectorate or, by implication, the world.³⁰

The people, however, could clearly exert the most power or authority, over those who stood nearby. Individual activists complained about measures that created larger units of administration, asserting that amalgamation helped no one. Posted notices made clear that activists understood their vulnerability as they asserted people’s power: one unsigned notice ordered that if authorities killed any activist, whoever was standing near the local chief should immediately kill him.³¹ The Bataka Union’s vision of citizenship and inclusive people’s power literally required that rulers be within arm’s length of the people.

Kabaka and Power

Within Ganda political thought, clan and local intimate connections were part of political legitimacy, but kingship—loyalty to the Kabaka—was also central to the making of Buganda. The Kabaka’s praise names made this clear. He was Ssabataka (the head of the Bataka). Alternative names referenced his seductiveness and military power. But in taming that, and making it useful to the people, both men and women referred to him familiarly as Omufumbo (my husband). And that husband owned the Damula, the staff that was the symbol of rightful administration. The prime minister, like the senior wife of a polygynous household, wielded it in his service.

Before the end of 1953, political activists in Buganda were often highly critical of their Kabakas. Neither Daudi Chwa nor Mutesa II, who came of age in 1941, were promising candidates for loyalty and authority, and Bataka activists openly floated other potential candidates for the office (on the theory that since the Kabaka belonged to the people, they could replace him if they wished). They also criticized Mutesa’ choice of brides, inclination toward European dancing, and reluctance to confront European officials. By the middle of 1953, Mutesa was a vulnerable king, mired in scandal, contemplating divorce, widely considered an ineffectual (albeit charming) playboy without political common sense.³²

²⁹ *Munyonyozi*, (excerpted in translation in) *Fortnightly Review* for 8 April 1948; *Munyonyozi*, *Fortnightly Report*, 27 April 1948, CO 537/3600, NAGB.

³⁰ Translated from the *Uganda Star*, *Fortnightly Report*, 27 April 1948, CO537/3600, NAGB.

³¹ Rumors collected in Mengo, Buganda, *Fortnightly Report*, 2-12-48, CO 537/3600, NAGB.

³² Reports are too numerous to note. Among other things, Mutesa had taken his Christian wife’s sister as a second wife, reportedly bringing her to one of the parties associated with Queen Elizabeth II’s

Kabakas in Buganda, though, had opposed Closer Union as thoroughly and emphatically as any Bataka activist. Daudi Chwa, in 1929, had signed blunt protests against the Hilton Young Report that sketched out a united Uganda and a plan for East African Federation, pointing out that, “When the members of that Commission arrived here in Buganda, [we] ... [made] it clear that [we] could never agree to our kingdom of Buganda being joined up to the other countries of East Africa....” The official letter of protest against Closer Union rather patronizingly offered to explain again the history of Buganda and the 1900 Uganda Agreement, which it emphasized “left the Kabaka and his Lukiko their authority over the people of Buganda, in that Agreement the British Government, so far from taking away that authority, confirmed it....” Closer Union would break the Agreement and leave no one to defend the people of Buganda. “History shows us that many countries which began in this way, in the end have formed a union, the result of that would be in the end to abolish the power of the natives, who would no longer be taken into account....” leaving white people to tax, expropriate land, and rule in their own interest.³³

Even a weak Kabaka like Daudi Chwa, along with ministers notable primarily for their agreeability with British initiatives, found it necessary to oppose Closer Union as an innovation that would undermine the monarchy’s ability to defend Buganda. Defending Buganda—standing as protective husband, arbitrating within and explaining and protecting from outsiders—was key to the Kabakaship, and made the Kabakaship key to Buganda. The Kabaka’s power was not unchanging—historically, nineteenth-century Kabakas such as Suna and Mutesa I had been associated with radical innovation as Suna connected Buganda with the Muslim world and Mutesa I had negotiated carefully with European missionaries and imperial agents. Geographically, the authority of the Kabaka was also expansive, as a good Kabaka commissioned the acquisition of new territories whether by conquest or through the sort of work Baganda chiefs such as Jemusi Miti and Semei Kakunguru did across the Uganda Protectorate in administering Bunyoro and Eastern Uganda. Nor was there anything xenophobic about Ganda ideas of the Kabaka as people’s protector—many took pride in his facility with European ideas and ways and interactions with aliens.

In a kingdom defined by metaphors of family, though, the imagined community of wives and clans was structurally antithetical to the progressive, technocratic and impersonal ideas of authority put forward in models of Closer Union and East African Federation. Despite a major setback in 1949, when a Bataka Union-led insurrection provoked arrests, deportations and banning orders, the Bataka emerged again by the early 1950s, with anthropologists and spies reporting that they were the most organized of political parties (with the possible exception of the Catholics) in Buganda’s elections for

coronation, and was being sued as a correspondent in a divorce case by Enoch Mulira, whose wife Kate gave birth to Mutesa’s child about a year after Mutesa’s Christian marriage. Nor were his activities limited to Baganda. His idea of partying involved propositioning women of the Sultan of Zanzibar’s court, a variety of Britons, and others.

³³ Kingdom of Buganda to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8-5-29, CO536/156, NAGB.

the kingdom's parliament.³⁴ In 1953, more popular than he had previously been in his life, Mutesa II backed what his people wanted, and refused to recommend to the Ganda parliament (Lukiiko) that they pass measures designed to integrate Buganda into Uganda. He even went along with his parliament's aggressive response to the colonial secretary's awkward suggestions about a closer union with East Africa. He failed to repudiate the parliament's efforts to secede from the Protectorate of Uganda. Far from acting like an autocrat, he listened, and under intense pressure from Governor Cohen, insisted on talking with his people.

The governor and Colonial Office, after a series of tense and inconclusive discussions, withdrew Britain's recognition of him as Kabaka, bundled him onto a plane, and deported him from Uganda, accusing him of failing cooperate loyally with British guidance.

Baganda responded with both grief, and practical mobilization. In the process, they explained how central the Kabaka was to their patriotism and lives as Baganda and citizens. Bataka provided discipline, resources, membership and responsibilities. But, especially in the wake of the deportation, Baganda explained that the Kabaka was about love and protection. Without him, Buganda lacked everything.³⁵

Letters to the Hancock Commission charged with constitutional reform in the wake of the crisis offered evocative language as well as making specific lobbying points. The beloved "King Mutesa II the only rightful monarch must be returned to his monarchy," asserted Emmanuel Bugimbi Kyejjire, who claimed to be speaking for many hundreds of thousands "of the citizens loyal to their king," before going on to say that without his return, any work "will end in clouds of smoke.... Just as a tree with its wide-spread branches, irrespective of constant watering and special nourishment, cannot exist or grow luxuriantly when it is cut off its root; even so the Baganda and all the citizens of Uganda cannot prosper and progress well ... without the return of the king...."³⁶ A writer associated with the Bishop's school asserted "He is the heart of our tribe, the source of our social life and happiness, and in him all values... are enshrined. We are as a tribe tied to our Kabaka, the like of which can only be exemplified by Christians tied to their Saviour."³⁷ Continuing the idea of the Kabaka's role as root, heart, values, and salvation, another correspondent picked up the baptism metaphor and made clear that Britain's role

³⁴ Audrey Richards, Notes, "Elections and After" November 2 and onwards, 1953, Box 7/3, Richards Papers, LSE.

³⁵ The *Uganda Post*'s coverage, for example, repeatedly referred to the "beloved" Kabaka and complain that the people were distressed as there had never before been a time without a kabaka. *Uganda Post*, December 4, 1953, Uganda Information Services Press Summary, MSS Perham Box 529/3, Perham Papers, RH. Audrey Richards's experiences with a variety of informants were even more evocative. Despite her efforts to offer the government line, people explained to her repeatedly that they loved the Kabaka. They wept. They worried. AI Richards letter to EMC 1953, Box 6/2 Richards Papers, LSE.

³⁶ Emmanuel Bugimbi Kyejjire to Hancock, 6 September 1954, Box 19/1, file 10, doc 7, Sir Keith Hancock Papers, Institute for Commonwealth Studies (hereafter ICS), University of London.

³⁷ ASN Tondo Luganda for Teachers of Bishop's school Mukono, 17 August 1954, Hancock Papers, ICS.

was that of sin: the beloved Kabaka's return, he told Britain, was "the only water which will clean your work."³⁸

The intensity of the reaction was ironic: Buganda had just elected a new parliament that was more representative and modern than any of its predecessors. It had a new level of popular representation in Uganda's Legislative Assembly. Prominent Baganda were bishops, lawyers, academics, government officials, successful businessmen and politicians and newspaper publishers. Visions of Buganda as vulnerable seem far from any objective assessment of the region's development. The patriotic statements expressed in response to the deportation of the Kabaka had little to do with economic interests, and the donations to both the campaign for his return and the celebration of his victory make clear that people were willing to make major sacrifices of resources and time to demonstrate their loyalty and devotion. Elaborately emotional letters to Sir Keith Hancock, moreover, were written to an academic expert brought in to solve the problem through constitution-writing and administrative reforms. He was not supposed even to be considering Mutesa II's return to Buganda, though the role of Kabakas in Buganda's future was undeniably on his agenda. Baganda could, if their fears of interference by the government of Uganda and merger into East African Federation were specific and structural, have used Hancock's constitutional initiative to put forward a new vision of nation, identity, or patriotic association, and pushed for it to be written into constitutional law. Instead, however, they called for their beloved and invoked trees and salvation.

Patriotism over Nationalism

The specific and complex history of opposition to Closer Union and evocations of patriotic loyalty to clans, Kabaka, and Buganda, may simply be a coincidence. Certainly anthropologists at the East African Institute of Social Research, and administrators and politicians of post-independence Uganda, both before and after independence, have considered Ganda Nationalism to be problematic and anomalous, despite President Yoweri Museveni's acceptance of the reinstatement of a limited Kabakaship in 1993. Ganda nationalism does, though, seem to have remarkable staying power, apparent not just in cultural heritage, but also in current Ugandan politics where Buganda has appeared again as a nucleus of challenges to the governing party's authority, fostering energetic political debate on talk radio and in Luganda theater, youth political involvement through everything from Bataka squad hip hop music to riots in defense of the Kabaka, effective fundraising from a global Ganda diaspora, and intense opposition to President Museveni's land policies.

But the power of Ganda patriotism raises substantive questions for students of nationalism. In a field dominated by general discussions and models, whether by stereotypical straw men like Renan and Stalin, Hobsbawm and Ranger's vision of invented traditions, Benedict Anderson's ideas of imagined communities, or Anthony Giddens'

³⁸ Ananias L. Mugambe, 23 June 1954, Hancock Papers, ICS.

vision of nations as bounded containers implicitly made real by their borders, theorists have tended to tie nationalism to modern bounded states and administrative structures.³⁹

Buganda's patriotic nationalism, though, has systematically contested every geographical line constraining the kingdom and Ganda activists have resisted efforts to delineate borders, whether in the colonial debates over Closer Union, ongoing struggles over the Lost Counties, or current mobilizations of diasporic Baganda and discussions with the government of Uganda.⁴⁰ Ebyaffe [our things] has instead been claimed by activists. And while the "us" claimed by Buganda's activists may well be imagined in some of the ways Anderson has described, through media and popular culture, and re-taught through invented and innovating traditions as Hobsbawm and Ranger have noted, that identity has been consistently understood as dynamic. It has not been a static heritage. It is not some archaic or essentialized system of "tribal" custom. Instead, it anchors people in a changing world not through a vision of a progressive linear time, but in both generational inheritance cycles and the lifecycles of kings. Instead of imperial modern institutions anchoring nationalism to a state among other states in a commonwealth or international community, Ganda patriots sought local values and connections to the point of being incoherent to late colonial observers. In their emphasis on history, connections, and feelings, they propounded not modern states, but a sort of flexible, moving, lumpy time that allowed them to think about identity not with the simple citizenship of equal brothers in a mother or fatherland, but within complex differentiations of grandfather and grandson, husband and wife, ancestor and inheritor all of whom are Buganda.

Activists in the 1940s and 1950s who fought efforts to more fully amalgamate Buganda and Uganda probably included some pragmatists who simply feared being outvoted in the Legislative Assembly. But these activists were both popular and effective because they connected with an indigenous patriotism, like that of Lukongwa, that was profoundly different from the bureaucratic, technocratic developmentalism of modern nationalists. Their opposition was based not on specific issues, such as land or fear of European and Indian political power in a multiracial union, but on a vision of political identity as something that should be organic and personal, rather than constructed and professional. Trees and salvation, not constitutions and equity, centered a political vision where citizens proclaimed themselves grandfathers and grandsons, wives to their Kabaka husband, and in the process articulated a profound and personal sense of rights, responsibilities, and significance that neither Uganda nor most other African states (let alone the East African Federation) have ever approached. This vision was far from traditionalist or closed—instead, it guided the kingdom's innovations and outreach. It was not tribal or parochial, but connected well both in the 1940s and today with international lobbying and diasporic networking. If this organic model of political identity seems idiosyncratic or exotic, it is entirely possible that this is simply because students of other regions have not been looking closely at the otherwise dull ongoing debates that produced

³⁹ For quick references to all these major theorists, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, ed., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ Riots in 2009 over the Kabaka's travel to Kayunga had to do with what areas he could legitimately be seen as influential over.

stalemates to progressive efforts to build an East African Federation, a Ugandan nation-state, or the equivalents elsewhere.

Here, therefore, drawing on exceptionally rich sources, I have taken local language of patriotism and political identity seriously. In doing so, I provide a basis for questioning the universality of liberal ideas of nationalism and political development that historians, political scientists, and many, many practitioners have deployed in the past century. At least in their rhetoric, Buganda's activists fit neither older models (whether primordial or imagined identities discussed above), nor newer ideas that emphasize the political topography of nation-state formation through segmental institutions, or the institutionalization of ethnic boundary making.⁴¹

Nationalism, as almost all its students recognize, is more than states, institutions, structures, or short term self interest. Rational actors rarely challenge the British empire successfully by living in trees, growing their beards, weeping conspicuously in constitutional negotiations, or screaming and wailing in school, church and hospital corridors.⁴² If we want to understand a nationalism's affective dimensions, those boring, fragmentary, inconclusive, non-rational and sometimes incoherent local conversations in the archives may be our best guides. And the words of activists suggested that their principal concerns may not have been the institutions, globally recognized boundaries, or symbolic elements brought up in negotiations between empires, development experts, and nationalists, but far more basic questions of scale. Beyond arm's length, modernity, economic development, political nationalism, and international engagement failed to offer a man like Paulo Lukongwa anything he lacked, allowing him to understand large scale economics, politics, or institutions as merely openings for outsiders to disrupt and take.

⁴¹ "Segmental institutions" were critical to the making of nation states in Philip Roeder's model, which draws principally from Eastern European cases. Philip G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 9–12. Boundary management is a key concern of Andreas Wimmer, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, 4 (2008). In a more recent work, Wimmer moves further to discuss not simply boundaries, but how hierarchical groups develop identities and shared ideas of legitimate governance through not simply institutions, but through exchange and interaction, creating increasingly dense and meaningful networks. This later idea—of exchange-based, transactional construction of nuclei of belonging and meaning—is much closer to ideas of Ganda patriotism, nationalism, and political identity described here. Andreas Wimmer, *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 11–15, 18–20.

⁴² All these were part of the response to the Kabaka's 1953 deportation. My favorite photo from the Kabaka's return is of his visit to a football [soccer] stadium where the men who had grown their beards during the years of his exile all engaged in a coordinated shaving. *Uganda Argus*, 24 October 1955, Clippings File, Dingle Foot Papers DGFT II 3/1/7, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge University, UK.